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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM
DI 7 NOVEMBER 1968
SUBJECT APPROVAL BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
OF PLAN DESIGNED TO GET A VIETNAMESE DELEGATION TO PARIS
TALKS WITHOUT LOSS OF FACE

CG- VIETNAM. SAIGON
SOURCE

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SUMMARY: THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL DECIDED AT A MEETING ON 7 NOVEMBER THAT THE GOVERNMENT (GVN) WOULD PROPOSE TO AMBASSADOR BUNDER IMMEDIATELY THE ADOPTION OF A VARIATION OF THE "OUR SIDE-YOUR SIDE" FORMULA AS A MEANS BY WHICH THE GVN COULD SEND A DELEGATION TO JOIN THE PARIS TALKS. UNDER THIS FORMULA GVN REPRESENTATIVES WOULD HEAD THE JOINT U.S./GVN DELEGATION AND SERVE AS CHIEF DELEGATION SPOKESMAN. THIS WOULD INSURE PLACING THE GVN ON AN EQUAL FOOTING WITH NORTH VIETNAM AND ABOVE THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT. THE MEETING PARTICIPANTS ALSO APPROVED A DETAILED FOREIGN MINISTRY ELABORATION OF THE THREE-STAGE PEACE PLAN PREVIOUSLY PROPOSED BY VICE PRESIDENT KY AND APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE AT THE COUNCIL'S 4 NOVEMBER MEETING. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING A 7 NOVEMBER 1968 MEETING LASTING FROM 1030 TO 1245 HOURS, MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AGREED ON A PLAN TO GET THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) DELEGATION INTO THE PARIS TALKS WITHOUT A LOSS OF FACE. THOSE IN ATTENDANCE WERE IN FULL AGREEMENT THAT THE GVN MUST MAKE A MOVE QUICKLY SINCE WORLD PUBLIC OPINION REGARDS SOUTH VIETNAM AS THE ONLY COUNTRY NOW OBSTRUCTING THE MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE.

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2. A MAJOR PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO CONSIDER A DETAILED PAPER PREPARED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF FOREIGN MINISTER TRAN CHANH THANH, ACTING ON THE ORDERS OF PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU, ON THE THREE-STAGE PEACE PLAN ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY. THE PLAN WAS APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL AT ITS 4 NOVEMBER MEETING.

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THOSE PRESENT FOUND THE PAPER PREPARED BY THANH TO BE SATISFACTORY.

3. KY THEN RAISED THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO PRESENT THE GVN THREE-STAGE PLAN TO THE INTERESTED PARTIES NOTING IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE SIMPLY TO DROP THE PARIS TALKS. HE OPPOSED THE EFFORTS OF SEVERAL OF THOSE PRESENT WHO FAVORED CALLING A PRESS CONFERENCE AND ANNOUNCING THE THREE-STAGE PLAN. KY SAID IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FIND SOME WAY TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN THE PARIS TALKS. AFTER FURTHER DISCUSSION OF HOW THE GVN COULD ACCOMPLISH THIS WITH "FACE," THE PROPOSAL WAS MADE THAT THE GVN RETURN TO THE "OUR SIDE-YOUR SIDE" FORMULA ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY THE AMERICANS.

4. PRESIDENT THIEU TOLD THE COUNCIL MEMBERS A WAY MUST BE FOUND TO MAKE THE "OUR SIDE" CONCEPT PALATABLE TO THE VIETNAMESE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL ELITE. THIS MIGHT BE DONE BY MAKING CLEAR GVN'S PRIMACY OVER THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (NLF) AND BY ASSURING EQUALITY BETWEEN THE GVN AND NORTH VIETNAM (DRV). IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THESE TWO OBJECTIVES, THIEU SAID, THE AMERICANS WOULD HAVE TO AGREE TO A SOUTH VIETNAMESE AS THE HEAD OF "OUR" DELEGATION AND ANOTHER SOUTH VIETNAMESE AS THE DELEGATION'S CHIEF SPOKESMAN. THIS FORMULA WOULD NOT MEAN, OF COURSE, THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT COULD NOT HAVE ITS OWN SPOKESMAN IN PARIS OR WOULD BE BOUND BY ANY DECISIONS OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE DELEGATION CHAIRMAN. IT WOULD SIMPLY PROVIDE A PRESTIGE FACTOR FOR THE GVN.

5. THIEU ASKED THANH TO INFORM AMBASSADOR BUNKER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THE GVN'S DESIRE TO UTILIZE THE "OUR SIDE-YOUR SIDE" FORMULA. HE SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE AMERICANS WOULD ACCEPT THESE PROPOSALS IN THEIR ENTIRETY BUT HE THOUGHT THEY MIGHT COME UP WITH AN ACCEPTABLE COUNTERPROPOSAL.

6. COMMENT: IF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS THE GVN CONCEPT OF THIS "OUR SIDE" FORMULA, THE GVN WILL PROBABLY HAVE ITS DELEGATION IN PARIS WITHIN ONE WEEK. THE GVN WILL PROPOSE ITS THREE-STAGE PEACE PLAN IN PARIS AFTER ITS DELEGATION ARRIVES THERE UNDER THE "OUR SIDE" FORMULA. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THE GVN IS BOUND TO THE THREE-STAGE PLAN OR UNWILLING TO CONSIDER OTHER APPROACHES. HOWEVER, THE GVN DOES BELIEVE IT SHOULD HAVE A BOLD AND WELL-REASONED PLAN PREPARED BEFORE ITS DELEGATION GOES TO PARIS.)

7. DISSEM: STATE (AMBASSADOR BUNKER, DEPUTY AMBASSADOR BERGER, POLITICAL COUNSELOR) USMACV (GENERAL AERAMS, MR. COLBY, MAJOR GENERAL DAVIDSON) CINCPAC (EXCLUSIVE FOR CINCPAC AND POLAD)

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